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## Notes and Opinions.

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**The Imagery of Isaiah.**—There are many evidences of an increasing appreciation of the Bible as literature. Two orders of scholars have coöperated in bringing about this result, namely, *literati*, who, like Matthew Arnold, have either directly magnified the literary character of the Bible, or, like Ruskin, have directly paid it tribute by suffusing their own style with it; and the critics, who by analysis of its composition have also revealed in fresh light its literary treasures. It would be a disastrous day for religion if the Bible should ever come to be regarded more attentively as literature than as life. Yet, with the right subordination of literature to life, a true conception of the Bible as literature will rather add to than detract from its effect upon life.

Regarding the Bible from the view-point of literature, there is no book which affords greater fascination to the reader than the Prophecy of Isaiah. Canon Driver says of him: “Isaiah’s poetical genius is superb. His characteristics are grandeur and beauty of conception, wealth of imagination, vividness of illustration, compressed energy, and splendor of diction. . . . No prophet has Isaiah’s power either of conception or of expression, none has the same command of noble thoughts or can present them in the same noble and attractive language.”

Among the remarkable literary characteristics of Isaiah perhaps the most striking and unique is what we may call, after Canon Driver, his *imagery*. Whether in metaphor, simile, parable, or illustration, this imagery is marvelous in its power, its adaptiveness, its alertness. The reader is surprised, charmed, fascinated at every fresh disclosure of the imaginative power which, under the influence of the spirit of God, scintillates and flashes in such sparkling hues upon the pages of Isaiah.

It is my purpose to select a number out of many instances of the expressive use of imagery in his prophecy, in order to call more distinct attention to their force, originality, and picturesqueness. In interpreting these passages my chief indebtedness is to the Commentary of Professor George Adam Smith. It is impossible to forbear, in passing, from bestowing a tribute of admiration upon this book. Com-

mentaries are commonly supposed to be dry reading, except to scholars of the first water; but it would be difficult to find a history, a biography, or even a novel, which surpasses in attractiveness and interest this clear, sympathetic, and scholarly interpretation of Isaiah. If what William Tyndale called "the most sweet smell of holy letters" is a musty odor, then this is no true commentary, for it is as fresh as the new-turned sod and as timely as the morning newspaper. If this had been the typical commentary, the paper-covered novel would not now reign so supreme in the book-stalls. Scholarship and literary art, erudition and the understanding of present-day issues, are here most happily and skillfully blended. But even so able commentators, not only as George Adam Smith, but as Cheyne and Driver, to say nothing of the illustrious Germans, do not render it superfluous to call attention, as we propose, to one of the literary distinctions of this great prophecy.

(1) We cannot begin with a finer illustration of Isaiah's imagery than the vineyard parable of chap. 5. *My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.* The cogency of this figure in expressing the care, solicitude, heedfulness of God's provision for Israel's fruitfulness is perfect. The swift touches with which the prophet fills in his word-picture— not one too many, not one too few— present it so clearly to the mind as to greatly enhance the startling and forceful application of it which follows. To the Israelite such a parable, so finely conceived and deftly drawn, must have been intensely impressive. Even to the modern reader the universality of its application renders it almost equally significant and impressive.

(2) In the same chapter, vss. 18 and 19, occurs a very forceful metaphor, which has been obscured by the translation. *Woe unto them that draw punishment* [instead of iniquity. *Vide* George Adam Smith] *near with cords of vanity and sin* [in the sense of its effect] *as it were with a cart-rope: that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work* [of judgment] *that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy one of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it.* Thus is represented the sneering bravado of the prosperous and wicked, who at the very moment they carp at it are harnessed to that judgment and are drawing it toward them. Of this they are disastrously ignorant; but the prophet sees it clearly.

(3) In picturing the approaching incursions of the hosts of Assyria Isaiah uses three realistic and notable comparisons, which we may group together. In the first (5:28, 29) he likens the Assyrian warrior in his fierceness to a lion growling and laying hold of his prey and carrying it off to a place of safety to devour. A herd of such lions, whose growling is like the roaring of the sea, coming up upon helpless Jerusalem forms a picture of terrible distinctness. Again (7:18, 19) he pictures the Assyrians, in their multitude and their pestiferous and wasting power, as a cloud of destructive insects which, at the *whistling of the Lord*, come sweeping down and settle on all the valleys and rocks and bushes, bringing utter desolation.

At another time (8:7, 8) he takes his clue from the foolish admiration which the Jews had begun to manifest for the broad rivers of Assyria and Damascus, as compared with their own sparse and trickling streams. With a fine irony he tells them that they shall have enough of the rivers which they covet. *Now, therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river strong and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; and he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.*

(4) As contrasted with these vivid pictures of the might of Assyria, as an instrument in the hand of the Almighty, consider the inherent weakness and evanescence of the Assyrian power taken by itself—as represented in Isaiah's figure of the *axe* and the *saw* and the *rod*. In order to make the contrast still more effective the Assyrian is first represented as proudly exhorting his invincible prowess under the figure of the successful nest robber: *My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathereth eggs left, have I gathered all the earth, and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped* (10:14). Having put these haughty words into the mouth of the Assyrian king, Isaiah proceeds to show the utter folly of this boast by means of the following most apt and unanswerable of argumentative illustrations: *Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, as if the staff should lift up [as if it were] no wood* (10:15).

(5) At the close of chap. 28 there occurs a striking figure, by which the prophet illustrates the purposive nature of God's treatment of men. He compares God to the husbandman, and asks,

very pertinently, if the husbandman carries on his various processes of husbandry without order or purpose. *Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he [do nothing but] open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye in their place?* He does this, and does it because God teaches him. *For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.* Moreover, when it comes to the harvest time he acts with the same purpose and discretion. He does not treat all the different grains alike, but some he threshes with a light instrument, and some with a heavy. *For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing machine, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin, but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Breaa corn is ground, for he will not e'er be threshing it: but though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not crush it.* In other words, the farmer, even when his work is most protracted, and seems both rough and purposeless, is acting with the greatest wisdom for an end. Much more so God; from whom the husbandman derives his wisdom. *This also cometh from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*

(6) Of all the beautiful and significant metaphors which Isaiah employs none steals so sweetly into the consciousness and lingers so long and lovingly in the mind as that representation, in the second verse of the thirty-second chapter, of *a man* under the similitude of a rock in the desert. *And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* "In the East," says Professor George Adam Smith, "the following phenomenon is often observed: Where the desert touches a river valley or oasis, the sand is in a continual state of drift from the wind, and it is this drift which is the real cause of the barrenness of such portions of the desert at least as abut upon the fertile land. For under the rain, or by infiltration of the river, plants often spring through the sand, and there is sometimes promise of considerable fertility. It never lasts. Down comes the periodic drift, and life is stunted or choked out. But set down a rock on the sand, and see the difference its presence makes. After a few showers, to the leeward side of this some blades will spring up; if you have patience you will see in time a garden." Whether, in drawing this beautiful symbolic scene of verdure springing up under the shelter of the protecting rock, the prophet had in mind the influence of the

Messiah, whose coming he had predicted, or only that of any one of a line of righteous kings, the church has gratefully, and with entire justification, referred the metaphor to the "Rock of Ages."

These metaphors, which have been culled from a veritable bank of varied flowers, descriptive and analogical, will serve, perhaps, to indicate the wealth and beauty of the imagery of this glowing prophecy. The distinctive characteristic of Isaiah's use of metaphor is its spontaneity, its freedom, its unique adaptiveness. Two facts are necessary to account for this marvelous literary power, an imagination of extraordinary richness, and *inspiration*. No man could write thus unless he were gifted. No man could write thus unless he were also inspired. It has been customary in the past to assume that inspiration alone is sufficient account for all the excellencies, not only of substance, but of form, in the literature of the Bible. Now we have come to believe that there must have been, in order to the production of such a literature, first of all, minds of exceptional gifts and abilities, and then the blowing upon them of the gentle wind of God's spirit to make the spices thereof flow out.

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SALEM, MASS.

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The cut upon the cover of this number reproduces the celebrated study for the head of Christ by Leonardo da Vinci. It is preserved in the collection of the Brera in Milan.

THE "Zionist" conference, mentioned in the September BIBLICAL WORLD, met at Basle, Switzerland, August 29-31. About 200 delegates, including 30 women, were present. Among other business, the conference voted unanimously in favor of securing land in Palestine and establishing a permanent home for the Jewish people, and the consolidation of all Jews with the aid of the great powers. A committee was appointed to act as the center of the movement, its headquarters being at Vienna. It was also voted to raise \$50,000,000, presumably for the purchase of Palestine, and to appoint a committee to report upon establishing a university at Jerusalem. The conference meets next year at Jerusalem. As to the practical results of the movement of which this conference is a part, the *Kritik*, of Berlin, states that already 26 millions have thus far been founded in Palestine, with a population of 9000. Anyone who has seen the great estate or the village of Jaûneh, near Lake Huleh, will not doubt as to the possibility of establishing prosperous estates in the country.

IN THE *Expositor* for September Rev. S. Baring-Gould thus sums up his position in regard to Paul's mental qualities. He contends:

(1) That Paul's mind was moulded by Rabbinism, and that it never altered its shape.

(2) That, though he may have wished and proposed to go to the Gentiles, he never did so, because he found himself incapable of convincing them with his rabbinic method of argument based on texts taken arbitrarily and twisted about to suit his purpose. To argue on texts you must have an opponent who knows and accepts the texts.

(3) That, failing to reach the heathen, he devoted his energies to detaching from synagogues the lax party among the Jews and the proselytes they had already gained.

(4) That it was due to this proceeding, greatly affecting their interests, that he provoked so much irritation among the strict Jews, breaking out into riot against him.

Some of these propositions are rather novel, but one is not inclined to believe that the evidence in favor of them is as "overwhelming" as their author holds. That Paul never got over being a Jew, and that his rabbinical training is somewhat evident, and that he was not as "Græcized" as some claim, can be admitted. But that he uniformly abused Scripture and never won men direct from heathenism is untrue. What as to the Galatians and the Athenians and Thessalonians and some of the Corinthians? Mr. Baring-Gould's views are like many others—half-truths forced into hypotheses into which facts are forced to fit.